

Message Text

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15

ACTION NEA-09

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PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01 ACDA-05 SAB-01

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P 041047Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2559

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY SANAA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

USMISSION GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 0395

BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SY, SU

SUBJECT: GROMYKO VISITS DAMASCUS, FEB 1-3

1. SUMMARY: SOVIET FOREIGN MINISTER ANDRE GROMYKO
ENDED THREE-DAY VISIT TO SYRIA ON FEB 3 DURING WHICH
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HE MET WITH PRESIDENT ASAD, PRIME MINISTER AYYUBI,

FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM, AND PLO CHAIRMAN ARAFAT. SYRIANS GAVE SOVIET FOREIGN MINISTER CORDIAL WELCOME UNDERSCORING IMPORTANCE SARG PLACES IN GOOD RELATIONS WITH SOVIET UNION. ON FINAL DAY OF VISIT GROMYKO AND KHADDAM INITIALED TWO NEW AGREEMENTS-- ONE FOR ECONOMIC AND TEHCNICAL COOPERATION AND OTHER FOR COOPERATION IN FIELDS OF HEALTH AND MEDICAL SERVICES. FROM SYRIAN POINT OF VIEW, NOTEWORTHY IN FINAL COMMUNIQUE WAS CALL FOR RECONVENING OF GENEVA CONFERENCE "NO LATER THAN BEGINNING OF MARCH" WITH FULL PARTICIPATION OF PLO. END SUMMARY.

2. GROMYKO ARRIVED LATE AFTERNOON FEB 1 FOR TALKS WITH SYRIAN OFFICIALS RE M.E. SITUATION AND SYRIAN-SOVIET BILATERAL RELATIONS. EVENTS SEEMED TO CONFIRM SPECULATION PRECEDING HIS VISIT THAT SYRIAN STOP WOULD LARGELY BE PRELUDE TO MORE IMPORTANT VISIT TO EGYPT AS THERE NO KNOWN SIGNIFICANT ISSUES COMPLICATING RELATIONS BETWEEN DAMASCUS AND MOSCOW. KHADDAM AND GROMYKO MET FOR TWO HOURS FEBRUARY 2, FOLLOWED BY DINNER HOSTED BY SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER. LARGE MINISTERIAL ARRAY IN ATTENDANCE, INCLUDING DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER HAYDAR, MINISTER OF ECONOMY AND FOREIGN TRADE IMADI AND MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS SIBAI UNDERSCORED IMPORTANCE SYRIA PLACES IN HER RELATIONSHIP WITH SOVIET UNION. TEXT OF TOASTS CARRIED BY FBIS. KHADDAM STRESSED NEED FOR SYRIA TO STRENGTHEN ITSELF TO RECOVER ARAB LANDS. WHILE SYRIAN FONMIN USUALLY TAKES INITIATIVE IN SUCH FORUMS TO CASTIGATE "ZIONIST AND IMPERIALIST FORCES WHO STAND BEHIND ISRAEL," ON THIS OCCASION IT WAS GROMYKO WHO ACCUSED ISRAEL "BACKED BY IMPERIALIST CIRCLES" OF KEEPING TENSION HIGH IN ME AND RESORTING TO POLICY OF INTIMIDATION. GROMYKO EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE ARAB PEOPLE WOULD RELY BOTH ON SUPPORT OF FRIENDLY STATES AND ON INCREASING ARAB UNIT TO RESIST TERMS OF ANY IMPOSED PEACE NOT IN ACCORD AGREE WITH LEGITIMATE ARAB INTERESTS. IN APPARENT REFERENCE TO EGYPTIANS, GROMYKO EMPHASIZED TO SYRIANS THAT SOVIET PEOPLE RECOGNIZE VALUE OF REAL FRIENDSHIP. GROMYKO WAS CATEGORIC ON SOVIET SUPPORT OF RIGHT OF PALESTINIANS "TO ESTABLISH THEIR OWN STATE." (COMMENT: FOREGOING IS LITERAL TRANSLATION ARABIC CONFIDENTIAL

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VERSION OF TOAST PRINTED DAMASCUS PRESS FEB 2, "BIMAA FIIHA HAQQUHU FII INSHA' DAWLATIHL." IN CONTRAST TO VARIETY OF FORMULAE POSSIBLE IN RUSSIAN LANGUAGE REPORTED MOSCOW 1489, ARABIC TEXT IN THIS INSTANCE IS STRAIGHTFORWARD AND RESTATES LONGSTANDING SYRIAN POSITION.) KHADDAM SPOKE EXTEMPORANEOUSLY WHILE GROMYKO READ PREPARED TEXT.

3. ON FEB 2 GROMYKO SAW PRESIDENT ASAD IN MEETING WHICH REPORT SAID LASTED FIVE AND HALF HOURS. STATEMENT ISSUED AT CLOSE OF MEETING SAID DISCUSSIONS CENTERED ON BILATERAL RELATIONS AND CURRENT EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE JUST PEACE IN AREA.

4. GROMYKO ALSO MET FOR TWO HOURS WITH YASIR ARAFAT ON FEB 2. MEETING TOOK PLACE IN SOVIET EMBASSY AND INCLUDED SOVIET AMBASSADOR AND M.D. SYTENKO ON SOVIET SIDE AND PLO OFFICIALS KHALID AL-FAHUM AND FARUQ KADDUMI ON PLO SIDE. WE HAVE NO INFORMATION ON GROUND COVERED BUT PALESTINIAN SOURCE LATER STATED TO PRESS THAT MEETING WAS "EXTREMELY IMPORTANT." IMMEDIATELY AFTER MEETING ARAFAT CONVENED PLO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FOR ITS SECOND MEETING OF DAY.

5. AT END OF VISIT TWO SIDES ISSUED JOINT COMMUNIQUE. COMMUNIQUE DESCRIBED ATMOSPHERE OF "COMPLETE UNDERSTANDING" DURING VISIT AND HAILED IMPORTANCE OF ASAD-BREZHNEV MEETING LAST APRIL IN MOSCOW. RE ME, COMMUNIQUE CALLED FOR END OF ISRAELI EXPANSIONIST POLICY, RETURN OF OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES, AND GUARANTEE OF NATIONAL RIGHTS OF PALESTINIAN ARAB PEOPLE. BOTH SIDES ALSO REITERATED "CONVICTION" THAT JUST SETTLEMENT REQUIRES INVOLVEMENT OF ALL PARTIES CONCERNED AND SHOULD SOLVE ALL ISSUES RESULTING FROM DISPUTE. COMMUNIQUE THEN STRESSED NEED FOR "IMMEDIATE" RESUMPTION OF GENEVA CONFERENCE "UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES LATER THAN BY END OF FEBRUARY OR BEGINNING OF MARCH THIS YEAR" AND FOR PARTICIPATION OF PLO AT GENEVA. REGARDING SOVIET MILITARY SUPPLY, COMMUNIQUE REFERRED TO JOINT STATEMENT OF APRIL 13, 1974, CONCERNING IMPORTANCE OF STRENGTHENING DEFENSE CAPABILITY OF SYRIA AND RIGHT FOR SYRIA TO USE

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ALL EFFECTIVE MEANS TO LIBERATE ITS OCCUPIED TERRITORY. IN CASE ANY READER HAD MISSED THE POINT, COMMUNIQUE ALSO UNDERLINED SYRIAN POSITION THAT USSR MUST PARTICIPATE IN ALL STAGES AND FIELDS OF EFFORTS TO FIND JUST SOLUTION OF ME PROBLEM.

6. COMMENT: THERE WAS NO SPECIAL EXCITEMENT SURROUNDING GROMYKO VISIT LOCALLY. WHILE SYRIANS WOULD NEVER SAY NO IF SOVIETS HAD ASKED FOR VISIT, WE HAVE NO INDICATION THAT SARG INITIATED REQUEST FOR GROMYKO VISIT. COMMUNIQUE WAS FURTHER OPPORTUNITY FOR SARG TO HAVE PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR ITS POSITION--PARTICULARLY EARLY RESUMPTION OF GENEVA CONFERENCE. THE EXTRA DETAIL THAT CONFERENCE MUST BE CONVENED NO LATER THAN EARLY MARCH IS PROBABLY A SYRIAN FLOURISH WHICH SOVIETS WERE HAPPY TO ACCEPT.

SOVIETS WERE ALSO PRESUMABLY PLEASED BY VISIT AS IT PROVIDED
STRONG SUPPORT FROM THIS ARAB COUNTRY FOR THEIR CONTINUED ROLE IN
ME AS GROMYKO HEADED TOWARD CAIRO. BLOC AMBASSADORS SURVEYED
THUSFAR DESCRIBED VISIT AS ROUTINE.
MURPHY

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